

## II) EASTERN AFRICA: PEASANTS AND PLANISTRATORS

by Raymond Apthorpe\*

Currently both the practices and the theories of rural development in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia put special emphasis on 'the human factor'. Conceptualizations of this quality vary in detail but there are several common characteristics. Usually singled out for their special causal significance are social relations, cultural values, and 'types' of individual personal qualities. In the most general terms there are many similarities between this approach to rural development in Africa and the 'human relations' and 'scientific management' philosophy of industrial and urban development in Europe and North America. But comparisons across such wide historical and technological gulfs are apt to be misleading. And the present concern with rural development in at least the Eastern region of Africa must be seen against the background, not merely of functional situations, but of a whole realm of new opportunities for material and institutional changes following uhuru and continuing trends of politicization of the state and ideology-building.

In all these regards, developments in Tanzania and Zambia tend to keep closely in ~~step, with Kenya~~ presenting, in general, a not very different kind of picture. Uganda, however, displays a very different party political scene and the effects of this situation have yet to work themselves out.

Another parameter is that Governments and their technical and other advisers in Eastern Africa tend to believe themselves to be always on the horns of a dilemma, as having to choose between either a market or a planned economy. The ideological decision (sometimes also the political decision) has been made firmly in favour of the planned economy. But it is increasingly evident that, as regards the implementation of plans, the far-reaching administrative sector enjoys a quasi-autonomy such that both the

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making and management of decisions are immune in large degree and in a wide variety of matters, to either political or judicial review.

In these circumstances, social research applied to the problems and prospects of rural development must be directed, as regards personnel, towards at least two human factors and the social and cultural values they subsume. On top there are - to coin a word - the planistrators. Planners-and-administrators, administrators-and-planners. For a wide range of development activities it is false to draw any hard and fast dividing line between these functions in practice. They tend to fuse and - in creative instances - to combine with entrepreneurship and management. These persons consider it as their task to create material and institutional means for development and to channel these into the rural areas where facilities of this kind are said to be absent and to be the cause of low development.

Underneath there are the peasants. These persons, sometimes still called tribesmen in Africa, are conceptualized as wantonly neglecting, if not wilfully rejecting, new economic and other opportunities because, unfortunately, their social and cultural assets and aspirations lack planistration, price responsiveness, etc. In short, the centre assumes that the periphery lacks leadership resources. The rationale of the various 'local government' and similar training programmes that have been set up by central institutions is to inculcate precisely this supposed missing ingredient.

Now, by its very nature, applied research in the social sciences, the results of which are intended to be locally relevant, takes locally prevailing social theories among its assumptions. Much social research in Eastern Africa, especially from 1964 to 1968, addressed itself to various aspects of rural development as sketched above, in the context of land settlement schemes. In their various forms, such schemes were and, to a lesser but nonetheless continuing extent, are locally very prominent in Government rural action programmes. The conclusion of a survey carried out by the present writer in 1964\* was that, in Tanzania, it was not the Government's pilot village settlements that showed the strongest signs of likely natural survival so much as the village movements that had started in the Ruvuma region. In Uganda, the prediction was that the school leavers' tea settlement scheme in Ankole would prove more viable than the group farms elsewhere in that country. In Kenya, some of the Million acre settlement schemes in the highlands seemed to show distinct

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\* In consultancy for the I.L.O., January-June and July-September.

signs of economic and other potential, costly though these schemes were.

Later case studies\* tend to confirm these prognostications. It is increasingly evident that the qualities that 'the planistrator' conveniently tends to attribute to 'the peasant' do not have much explanatory power, especially as regards failures in central planning and plan implementation. More potent seem to be the qualities of the planistration concerned, again especially as regards failures of schemes. These can be grouped under headings such as initial siting and budgetting considerations, administrative characteristics as they appear over time, and organizational capacity with particular reference to upward social mobility forces. The tautological nature of this 'evidence' as the argument is presented here does not make it any the less significant or the more palatable.

Results of a range of land settlement studies are becoming available\*\*, in sufficient variety to warrant a systematic review of the problems which emerge in this approach to rural development. However, among other difficulties, this presents theoretical questions which tend to go unasked until this stage of study. Evaluative surveys and case-studies, like the exercise of planning initiative itself, contain both predictive and visionary components, both technical and subjective judgements. The approved analytical techniques that are used for the assessment of the objective elements are not on the whole extended to the subjective ones. Furthermore, despite the present level of technical skills in development studies, the economic or social costs of a radical alternative to an existing project that seems to enjoy a life of its own (the quality of natural survival mentioned earlier) are virtually impossible to establish objectively, quickly and precisely. Procedures have been developed, within the superstructure - or part of it - for cost-benefit analysis of different types of infrastructures. But it has not been demonstrated (so far as I know) how the same procedures can be turned inwards to the analysis of changes of supra-structure that, by definition, any radical change would require. The obstacles to this reversal of the line of fire may be more sociological than logical. Furthermore, in Africa at present this realization is fraught with ideological significance. The main problem here is that, according to the ethical convention

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\*Preliminary reports on some of these are given in Nkanga 3 available (in U.K. from the writer, in Uganda from the Makerere Institute of Social Research, P.O. Box 16022, Kampala)

\*\*Most recently at the 1969 (January) conference of the University (of East Africa) Social Science Council held at Kampala and at the M.I.S.R. - I.D.E.P. Quarter Continent Conference that was held concurrently.

of development planning consultancies and the like, the border between disinterested and interested recommendations is supposed to be a visible one - and one that must never be crossed. In practice (sometimes just because of the nature of the terms of reference given to planners) to adopt this convention would often be to misconceive completely the material as well as the moral aspects of the situation, for which planning has been commissioned.

My contention here is simply that problems of this sort lack theoretical formulation in development studies, as it is believed that they should never arise in development planning. Also, with present emphasis on inter-disciplinary research, there has been a decline in concern with causation. It has often been argued that if the results of social science were to be useful to practitioners, policy recommendations must stem from a theory of causation - and they must be seen to do so. If this is still the conventional wisdom, then it calls for analysis in the light of inter-disciplinary findings. If it is not, we still have to decide how legitimate, intellectually, policy recommendations arising from "applied social science" research really are.

One result of such a new trend in development studies might be decreased emphasis on 'the human factor' as a last haven for explanations which can find no other anchorage. And there might be less of that combination of paternalism and victimization which accompanies theories that - in the last analysis - rest solely on persons. The nice and the nasty, the progressive and the backward. Personalism.

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